

8. DESIGN GUIDELINES



These Design Guidelines are the product of the long and intensive public process with the Kennedy Street community and are a reflection their vision and goals for the future of the corridor. The guidelines are intended to provide residents, property owners, business owners, developers, and District agencies with the tools to understand the desired physical form and character of the Kennedy Street Corridor. They apply to both new and infill development and are meant to provide a framework to evaluate proposals as they arise.

Kennedy Street is the heart of a diverse and dynamic community and the physical environment they share should reflect these qualities. These guidelines celebrate the existing strengths of the area and build upon those in shaping the future. They are structured in two ways, considering the corridor both as a whole and as a collection of a 3 unique areas with special characteristics. Within each design guideline, a general discussion relative to the entire corridor is followed by a section, where appropriate, which describes how that guideline might be refined within a particular sub-area in order to help define its character.

All the design guidelines are based on the following core principles:

- Celebrate and strengthen the existing patterns of place, allowing potential changes to emerge out of the existing context
- Manage development to balance residential livability and retail vitality
- Maintain neighborhood character and scale
- Enhance the quality of life through the creation of a clean, safe, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape environment

WHO IS EXPECTED TO USE THESE GUIDELINES?

Because these guidelines will be used in evaluating new development projects along the corridor, the most frequent users of this document will be the people concerned with the development of new buildings and public spaces.

Property Owners/Developers

The guidelines can acquaint property owners and developers with the issues identified in the Revitalization Plan regarding community character and give direction towards how new development can contribute to addressing relevant issues and meeting stated goals.

Designers

The guidelines will help architects and others who design buildings and public spaces to know what is expected of their products and what could make their designs more compatible with their surroundings, and/or more consistent with the goals of the Revitalization Plan.

Project Neighbors

People who live near new development proposals will benefit greatly from these guidelines, as they may give neighbors a better vision of projects proposed nearby and how those projects can enhance the neighborhood's character. Ultimately, the guidelines will be a tool that neighbors can use when they want to describe to developers or District representatives what they consider appropriate design for their neighborhood.

District representatives

Staff from the DC Office of Planning will use these guidelines in both short and long-term ways. In the short term, they will provide a clear and comprehensive way for them to discuss the goals, aspirations, and physical form of the Kennedy Street corridor with property and business owners who are considering improvements to their sites, as well as help identify strategies for addressing key sites along the corridor.

In the longer term, the guidelines should become the basis for future discussions regarding a Zoning Code re-write process. The zoning rewrite would embody the principles of the plan regarding the physical appearance and land use mix that the community has helped to identify and support.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

As reviewers apply the design guidelines to particular development projects, some important things to remember are:

- Each project is unique and will pose unique design issues. With some projects, trying to follow all of the guidelines could produce conflicts in the design. With most projects, staff will find some guidelines more important than others, and the guidelines that are most important on one project might not be at all on the next one.
- Many of the guidelines suggest using the existing context to determine appropriate solutions for the project under consideration. In some areas, the existing context is not well defined, or may be undesirable. In such cases, the new project should be recognized as a precedent with the opportunity to establish a pattern or identity from which subsequent development can take its cues.

- Many guidelines includes examples and illustrations of ways in which that guideline can be achieved. The examples are just that: examples. They are not the only acceptable solutions. Designers and reviewers should consider designs, styles and techniques not described in the examples but that meet the intent of the guideline.

WHERE DO THE GUIDELINES APPLY?

In general, these guidelines have been developed to address those areas directly along Kennedy Street. They could, however, be appropriate when considering changes to those properties or streets which are immediately to the north and south, having both physical and visual connections to Kennedy Street itself.

Design Guidelines

1) HEIGHT AND MASSING

Kennedy Street today consists primarily of one and two-story buildings, many of which are mixed use in nature. The existing C-2-A zoning designation for the area allows a maximum height of 50 feet, or a four- to five-story building. In order to keep the residential and community oriented scale and character of the corridor intact, the height and massing of new development should be carefully considered and responsive to the local context. This context will evolve as changes occur incrementally along the corridor.

a) Corridor

- i) To create continuity with the existing context, new construction should not exceed greatly a neighboring building's height without architectural details, such as cornice-lines, which help the two better relate.
- ii) Maximizing the allowable height at intersections should be encouraged as a way to develop a series of active nodes and visually signify their importance, particularly at the intersections at Georgia Ave, 5th Street, and North Capitol Street.



Consistent, yet slightly varied, building heights help provide a strong, unified streetwall along Barracks Row.

- iii) Massing that faces a public street should reflect the bay width and design rhythm of nearby buildings. Avoid large, continuous massing that overwhelms the pedestrian and the finer grain of existing buildings.
- iv) Building massing should be aligned with neighboring structures in order to form a cohesive street wall; locate uses such as parking to the interior of the lot/block.

- v) Buildings should have a clearly expressed base, middle, and top in order to relate to the pedestrian and to the existing context. This may be achieved through changes in material, fenestration, architectural detailing, or other methods.

b) Area 1: Georgia to 8th Street

- i) Design distinctive building facades marked by corner towers, greater height, and strong architectural expression in order to create “gateway” buildings which signal Kennedy Street’s presence to the broader community.
- ii) Buildings which, through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, may exceed the existing zoning heights should have setbacks and detailing that minimize the impact of the building’s size. If considered, the optimal location for increased height is the Kennedy Street and Georgia Avenue intersection. A PUD is a planning tool that allows a developer greater flexibility in site planning and building design, permitting incorporation of additional amenities in the design.

c) Area 2: 8th Street to Missouri/Kansas Intersection

- i) Encourage the development of additional height at the intersection of 5th Street and Kennedy Street to accentuate the importance of the corner and help create an activity node or neighborhood “hub”
- ii) As the geographic and symbolic heart of the neighborhood-oriented section of the corridor, transparent storefronts with active uses should be encouraged.



Gradual transitions in height from one building to the next help provide continuity within the streetscape.

d) Area 3: Missouri/Kansas to North Capitol

- i) Buildings should avoid long sections of continuous massing along the sidewalk. If the massing becomes very long, it should be made permeable and visually articulated with changes in material, color, or other architectural details.
- ii) Increased height at the intersection of Kennedy Street and North Capitol would help announce the presence of the corridor to the broader community. Careful consideration must be given to designs in which heights exceed by-right limits due to the proximity, character, and scale of the residential area along North Capitol Street.



The intersection of Georgia and Kennedy is a location which could be considered for taller buildings which form a “gateway” to the neighborhood.

kennedy street

revitalization plan



Additional height at intersections helps give prominence and adds vibrancy to the corners.

2) RELATIONSHIP TO CONTEXT

Although a building may conform to the by-right dimensions for height and massing, the ability for a new or significantly renovated building to blend with its context is dependent on several design relationships.

a) Corridor

- i) Buildings should strive to have a highly articulated rhythm of windows, doors, and other architectural elements in order to

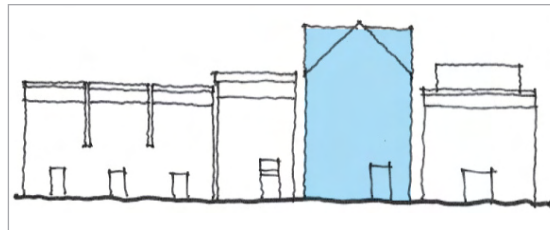
provide a pedestrian-scaled sidewalk experience and enable the buildings to relate to the historic fabric of the corridor.

- ii) New buildings should respect the area's historic character but should not be limited to replicating the materials and details of the existing buildings. New and innovative approaches to building design should not be discouraged unless they are harshly discordant with the existing context.
- iii) To preserve the existing richness and

variety of building types and styles, no one architectural style or material palette should dominate the corridor as it changes over time.

b) Area 3: Missouri/Kansas to North Capitol

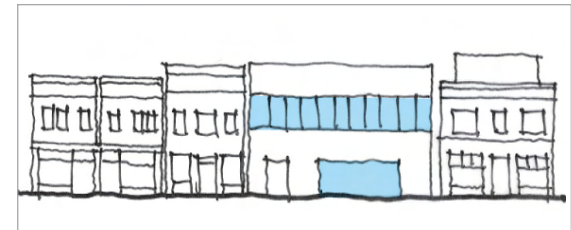
- i) To help mitigate the impact of their large floor areas, buildings in this area should attempt to break into a series of smaller volumes and avoid overwhelming the surrounding housing



PREFERRED



Architecture features like cornices can relate to adjacent buildings, lowering the apparent, conflicting height of the new building.



PREFERRED



The pattern and proportion of windows, doors and other elements is important in determining the building's architectural character. Following the proportion and pattern of neighboring buildings will increase the consistency of the overall streetscape.

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Large areas of glass and interior lighting help visually connect the interior of this store to the life of the sidewalk.



Blank walls on existing buildings can be treated in ways which help enliven the sidewalk.

3) FAÇADE DESIGN

The building façade is perhaps the most influential element in creating an image of a place and defining its character. The following guidelines are meant to address not only new construction, but the renovation of the many fine examples of historic buildings along Kennedy Street which have been detrimentally modified over the years. For a more detailed description of storefront design, also see [Thrive: A guide to storefront design in the District of Columbia](#), produced by the Office of Planning.



Facades, which wrap corners help strengthen the importance of intersections as nodes of activity.

a) Relationship between interior and exterior

- i) Transparent materials and interior lighting should be used to maximize visibility of street level uses. Ground floor facades should be as transparent as possible and allow a clear view from the sidewalk to the interior space of the building
- ii) Use of security grates should be limited to those types which are housed on the interior of the door or window system.
- iii) Blank walls should be avoided along all streets and pedestrian walkways. Where blank walls already exist, efforts should be made to improve their visual appearance.

b) Orientation

- i) Major entrances should be located on Kennedy Street and at or near corners whenever possible.
- ii) Strengthen all four corners of each intersection by encouraging buildings to “wrap” around the corner, with primary facades facing both streets; avoid placing the sides of buildings along Kennedy Street.
- iii) Locate loading areas on side streets or service alleys, and away from residential entrances

4) SIGNAGE

Storefront signage is one of the most important elements in defining the character of a business. Collectively, the signage in an area can also help create an identity for a specific area, with letter height, sign type, lighting, and materials all contributing to creating a unified image of a place.

a) Corridor

- i) Signage and banners on light poles should be located along Kennedy Street from Georgia Ave. to North Capital Street to create a unifying element for the corridor.
- ii) Signage should be constructed of durable materials and secured properly to the building façade.
- iii) Employ signage colors and typefaces that compliment the primary architectural styles; size and location of signs should be relatively consistent from building to building.
- iv) Avoid signage that covers or obscures significant architectural details or covers transparent sections of the storefront glass.

b) Area 1: Georgia to 8th Street

- i) Signage in this area should be scaled and detailed to fit harmoniously with the residential character of the blocks. The intersection of Georgia and Kennedy can sustain larger sign areas, letter heights, and lighting due to its location along a significant retail corridor with high volume automobile traffic.

c) Area 2: 8th Street to Missouri/Kansas Intersection

- i) Signage should reflect the neighborhood-oriented mixed use nature of this area, with elements scaled to the pedestrian and respectful of the many current and future residents.

d) Area 3: Missouri/Kansas to North Capitol

- i) With larger lots and buildings, this area has the opportunity to draw destination retailers which could serve a wider geographic area. As such, the signage in this area should be encouraged to be larger, more elaborate, illuminated, or otherwise enhanced to help create a lively and energetic area.



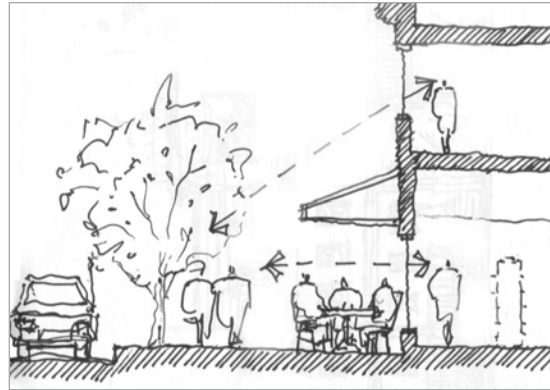
5) STREETScape

It is important to note that the streets are the largest public open space along the Kennedy Street corridor and should be considered as the major component of the public realm. As such, the corridor has a tremendous untapped resource in the many areas with very broad sidewalks.



Expanding the brick areas to include the whole sidewalk helps provide definition to places where special use of the sidewalk is encouraged.

Throughout the corridor, most corner intersections and virtually the entire south side of Kennedy Street between 3rd and North Capital have sidewalk dimensions in excess of 20 feet. These can potentially provide the community with areas for enhanced landscaping, more active pedestrian-oriented uses, and other elements that can enhance the pedestrian experience.



a) Sidewalks

- i) Currently, sidewalks along Kennedy Street are a combination of brick and concrete, with the brick areas within 3' of the curb and terminating before reaching the radiused corner areas at intersections. In order to accentuate the importance of the corner locations as hubs of activity, opportunities should be investigated to work with DDOT to expand the brick paving areas, ideally including the entire corner.
- ii) Defining special corners with special paving could encourage activities to spill out on to the sidewalk, such as cafes, restaurants, or merchandizing on the sidewalk (as currently occurs at the SW corner of 5th Street).



b) Utility Poles

- i) Relocating overhead utility cables and wires underground is a very expensive utility retrofit that causes major disruption along affected streets. Often the cost of burying overhead utility cables and wires is born by adjacent property owners. Along Kennedy Street, the utility poles should be re-aligned and considered for innovative public art installations. The image above shows an example of urban sidewalk art in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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c) Landscape

- i) Many residents expressed a desire to enhance the amount of green space along the corridor. The simplest way to do this is to strategically locate new street trees in locations which will have the greatest initial impact. Focusing on areas such as the “gateways” and major intersections such as 5th Street will improve the quality of these sites and also make them more attractive as places to continue investment by new and existing land owners.
- ii) Over time, a comprehensive strategy should bring as many new street trees to the corridor as possible.
- iii) The broad sidewalks at many corners and within area east of Missouri/Kansas also present the opportunity to develop creative solutions which could provide outdoor seating integrated with new landscape elements that could help improve the pedestrian experience.



Many areas with broad sidewalks are underutilized along the corridor.



Creative solutions could include seat-height landscaped planters which would provide an enhancement of the public realm.